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SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNISMDURING MAY 1950Anti-Communist Activities

The major anti-Communist events of the past month were steps taken toward the outlawing of the Communist Party in both Panama and Venezuela accompanied by police raids on Communist Party headquarters and seizure of Communist Party property. In addition in Venezuela Communist labor federations were dissolved. In Colombia, the labor federation (CTC) voted in a complete slate of non-Communist officers, and in Cuba the privately sponsored Inter-American Conference for Democracy and Freedom denounced Soviet imperialism and warned against revival of Fascism.

Other Latin American anti-Communist activity continued as before with arrests of Communists reported in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile for distributing propaganda, seizure of propaganda materials, and some anti-Communist propaganda denouncing as a swindle the selling of "Peace" bonds and stamps.

Political and Organizational Activity

Outlawing the Communist Party in Panama and Venezuela were the most important political developments affecting Latin American Communists during May. (In Cuba, the Communists gained from their collaboration in the election of the successful candidate for Mayor of Havana.) Elsewhere the Communists continue to attempt collaboration. For example, in Brazil as a result of numerous pending political deals, the Communist leaders believe that they can gain prestige, which will, in turn, give an impetus to recruiting and fund raising. Consequently, Communists are reorganizing in the expectation of being allowed relatively more freedom before the election, because of the desire of various legal parties to obtain their support.

In Chile, reportedly, the Communists are maintaining their clandestine organization, but operating more overtly, particularly with regard to collaborating with other political parties. In Trinidad, the West Indian National Party was revived and four of the new officials are Communists.

In Guatemala, a schism started in the leftist party to which most Communists in that country belong. This may eventually lead to political isolation of the Communists there.

Uruguayan Communists held their fifteenth Party Congress during May and selected a presidential candidate for the national elections.

Front Group Activity

The activities of various front-groups reported on in one country illustrate how the Communists seek to gain support from them. In Chile, the Frente Unido del Pueblo (FUP) is a Communist front group designed to

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SECRET

stimulate cooperation of all leftist groups including the Communists. The leaders of that group (mostly Communists) and the Communist Party leaders formed still another front group by establishing a Comite de Recuperacion de las Libertades Publicas to work for the repeal of the anti-Communist Law for the defense of democracy. The usual youth and student front groups are present, of course, but a new student front group was recently formed called Union Cultural Inter-americana to exploit historic Latin American cultural sympathies. In addition, a Yugoslav front-group exploits the cultural affinities of the Slav colony in Santiago for Communist purposes. The "Peace" committee and Communist dominated labor federation, are also doing the same job in their respective fields.

"Peace" Campaign

"Peace" Committees were reorganized in Mexico, Ecuador and Guatemala in an attempt to make them more active, since the old committees were rather inactive. Some Communist inspired "Peace" propaganda has been reported in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Cuba, Guatemala, and Mexico. The "Peace" theme is carried out by various front groups, Communist labor unions, Communist Parties, as well as by the "Peace" committees. Collection of signatures on "Peace" petitions in accordance with instructions from the Stockholm "Peace" conference has been carried out in a number of countries, but so far Moscow's call for "an active fight for peace by all possible means" apparently has not been answered with physical violence directly related to the "Peace" movement.

May Day Parades and Communist Labor Agitation

May Day in Latin America passed with fairly large labor demonstrations which were orderly and generally moderate in tone, and with less Communist propaganda than usual except in Guatemala. In Argentina there was a large labor celebration though somewhat smaller than last year. The labor celebration in Mexico was larger than in other years, and in Cuba it was about as expected. In one city of Brazil some violence occurred on May Day.

The quiet May Day was followed a few days later, however, by severe strikes in Venezuela, Chile, and Argentina, and by civil disturbances in Bolivia. Communists were active in the Venezuelan strike and allegedly had some part in all of the other developments.

Propaganda Activity

Propaganda material reportedly was received by the Communists during the month from various foreign sources. The Chilean Communists received some material from France. Some Czechoslovakian propaganda material found its way into Paraguayan Communist hands. Uruguayan Communists, reportedly, expected to receive 500 copies in Spanish of the Bucharest Organ of Information of the Communist Workers Parties.

SECRET

SECRET

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Although the Communists attempt to use various types of propaganda, they have been forced to publish their weeklies clandestinely or under varying titles in countries actively repressing them. Lack of finances appears to be a perennial problem of Communist publications in Latin America.

Typical Communist propaganda themes in Latin America have been reported during May. For example, propaganda against the American military and air missions, the Rio and Bogotá Pacts, and the commercial agreement with the US appeared in Paraguay. Another example was in Panama, where the Communists seized upon an incident in which US soldiers involved in an armed robbery near Panama City were court-martialed. They propagandized the incident to develop a demand for extradition of the soldiers so that they might be tried in Panamanian courts. The propaganda was designed to discredit the United States' motives and moral character, and to stir up latent ill will toward the United States.

Communist Labor Activity

The Venezuelan petroleum strike was probably the main labor effort of the Communists in Latin America during May. The result was a setback for the Communists, since their unions and petroleum federation were dissolved and the Party outlawed.

The Communists do not have the capability of carrying on strikes in Latin America in a coordinated fashion necessary to seriously impair the movement of essential materials to the United States. They do have the capability, however, of instigating or prolonging strikes as labor grievances arise in many places in Latin America. Although the Communists are attempting to build up their capabilities for coordinated strike action in Latin America, it is believed that they will not make notable progress toward this objective in the foreseeable future.

The regional committees of the CTAL set up at the March 1950 CTAL meeting in Montevideo have been variously reported as three or four in number. No definite physical headquarters set up has been reported for these Committees, though suggested possible places for such headquarters are Uruguay, Mexico, and Cuba.

On May 6, the Colombian Confederation of Workers (CTC) voted to separate from the CTAL and AFTU and to affiliate with the ICFU. It also voted in an entire slate of non-Communist officers. This has reduced the Colombian Communists' ability to disseminate propaganda, to stimulate or prolong strikes, and to recruit new members. The Mexican Miners Union also repudiated Communist leadership by withdrawing from Lombardo's UNION which was affiliated with the CTAL and the AFTU.

SUMMARY

May has been a very unfavorable month for Latin American Communists, largely because the Communist parties and the Communist labor federations lost their legal status in Panama and Venezuela. Communist propaganda efforts were not imposing, and during May Day, Communists made a less impressive showing than in the previous few years.

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